

January 31, 2011

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, January 28, 2011

The Disability Advisory Committee met on Friday, January 28, 2011 at the Cowlitz County Administration Building. The meeting agenda is attached.

Meeting attendees were:

Tom Allman, Special Guest, Secretary of State's Office, Elections  
David O'Brien, Special Guest, Skamania County Elections Manager  
Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor  
Carolyn Myers, Elections Supervisor  
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB, AARP  
Audrey Jolley, Disability Resources  
Sunnie Smith, Emergency Shelter  
Karla Black, Disability Resources  
Anita Hopkins, CAP  
Pam Howe, Lifeworks  
Sharon Weinhold, Disability Outreach Coordinator

### Welcome/Introductions.

The Committee members welcomed our special guests. Everyone introduced themselves and said a few words about the organization they were representing.

One of our Committee members, Bernie Altman, and his wife Marcia were in a serious automobile accident over the weekend. The Committee members took a few minutes to sign a card to let Bernie and his wife know we are thinking of them and wish them a full and speedy recovery.

Status of Special Election. Committee members were curious about the status of the February 8, 2011 Special Election. This is not a county wide Election and only voters in the Longview and Toutle Lake School Districts are eligible to vote in this Election. As of January 28, 5,600 voters (about 22%) returned their ballot. Historic turnout rates for similar Special Elections are about 45%. For this Election to date, almost 60% of the ballots have been returned through the six accessible ballot drop boxes located throughout the county. As of January 28, two voters had voted on our Accessibility Voting Units (AVU), the eSlate.

Longview Ballot Boxes. The Longview City Council is discussing a change to the traffic patterns on the Longview Civic Circle and Broadway Avenue, just off of the Civic Circle, for safety reasons. Our largest accessible ballot box is located on the Civic Circle; another ballot box is on Broadway Avenue near the Civic Circle. These two ballot boxes have a highest ballot return rate of all of the other four ballot boxes combined. The change under consideration by the Longview City Council may require moving ne or

both of the ballot boxes to another location. The Elections Office is very interested in the outcome of the discussions that may involve moving these ballot boxes. We received Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funding to purchase the ballot boxes and walkway to the ballot boxes. The topic was on the Longview City Council Agenda for late January, but was removed and has not been rescheduled. The Elections Office is continuing to monitor this potential change.

The Committee members discussed the importance of these ballot boxes to the voters in the community. There are quite a few apartment buildings in the area surrounding the Civic Circle that house senior citizens and people with disabilities. Many of these citizens do not drive or do not have an automobile. The convenience of walking to these accessible ballot boxes is very important to these citizens. The location is also very important to drivers who pass by the Civic Circle every day on their way to work or on other business.

#### Round Table Discussion.

This discussion served as an excellent exchange of information. The Disability Advisory Committee members discussed some of the committee's key accomplishments over the last 4 1/2 years. The Committee meets quarterly. The Committee members are in tune with the Election cycle and Election processes, and provide excellent advice to the Elections Office.

There were questions on how we recruit members for the Committee and the number of people who use our AVUs. For member recruitment, we market the Committee throughout the year. There is a board in the hallway near the Elections Office that highlights the Committee activities and accomplishments. To market our AVUs, the eSlate, we send monthly emails throughout the year and weekly emails during Election times to senior homes, retirement homes, nursing homes, senior centers, and organizations in the community that serve persons with disabilities. The emails address what is happening in Elections. We offer to demonstrate our AVUs or bring our AVUs for voting ballots to those who are interested at their location or at the Elections Office. We take our demonstration AVU to events and give attendees an opportunity to test vote on the AVU. We schedule our Disability Advisory Committee meetings around Election time so members can vote their ballots on the AVUs.

There was some discussion on other opportunities to pursue to market our accessibility improvements. Anita suggested we participate in the Veteran's Stand Down. Planning for the Stand Down is currently underway. Anita also mentioned this year's Senior Connections Fair will be held at the Mall. New displays and activities are planned, and it is expected the location will result in more foot traffic than in the past. Carolyn mentioned the new reader board at the Mall and suggested it might be a good opportunity for marketing. Sharon will pursue these ideas.

Tom Allman said his main job was to be a "resource" to the Elections Offices in helping improve accessibility to voters with disabilities. He wants to share information and good ideas he sees in the Elections Offices. He said he has been to 13 counties so far and would like to visit them all. He performs outreach and gives presentations on ADA and accessibility. He looks forward to meeting more people and sharing information at this

year's Elections Administrators Conference. Tom handed out his Business Card, which also is written in Braille. It was prepared by the State School of the Blind in Vancouver.

Disability Rights Washington Staff Visits. Disability Rights Washington conducted staff visits to the Elections Offices throughout Washington State during the 2010 Primary and General Election. Areas of interest during the visits included: Notice of Election, Accessible Parking, Signage, Route of Travel, Doors, Voter Information Postings, and Outreach. Cowlitz County was visited during the General Election. Tom reported that Cowlitz County was one of a few counties that had no accessibility barriers identified and no suggested improvement actions to take.

New Accessibility Grant Cycle. One grant cycle was announced for 2011. Grant applications are due April 1, 2011, and will be reviewed in May 2011. The total amount of funds available is \$300,000. There is a limit of one grant application per County, not to exceed \$50,000. The grant cycle will give Counties the opportunity to remedy any barriers to accessibility found during the Disability Rights Washington staff visits or to make other improvements. Committee members were encouraged to identify areas where they think we can make accessibility improvements.

A big thank you was extended to everyone for their attendance and participation at the meeting. Members were encouraged to vote on the eSlate if they had not already voted.

The next meeting will be in March 2011.

Sharon Weinhold  
Cowlitz County Elections  
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